



# Improving Employee Health

Easy Ways for Your Employees to Quit Smoking

## Smoking Affects People and Businesses

While the adult smoking rate has gone down over the last 10 years, nearly 17% of Vermont adults still smoke. And for certain groups – like young adults and lower-income Vermonters – those figures are even higher. Smoking puts people at risk for many diseases, can worsen chronic conditions like asthma and heart disease, and exposes nonsmokers to secondhand smoke. The result is that over 850 Vermonters die each year from tobacco-related diseases, which also affect the quality of their lives, as well as their families and friends.

Smoking also impacts Vermont's businesses through increased costs. Based on national figures, the following estimates show some of the costs of employee tobacco use:

- **Healthcare Costs** – smokers' healthcare costs are higher than those of nonsmokers: \$2,284 per year, per smoker<sup>1</sup>
- **Smoking breaks** – lost work time, compared to nonsmokers work time: \$2,574 per year, per smoker<sup>2</sup>
- **Absenteeism** – smokers are absent more than nonsmokers and ex-smokers: \$466 per year, per smoker<sup>3</sup>

There are other costs associated with smoking, such as secondhand smoke exposure and workers' compensation, but based only on the three issues listed above, the cost of employee tobacco use is approximately \$5,324 per year, per smoker.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOUR BUSINESS? DO THE MATH...

Total employees \_\_\_\_\_ x 18% (VT adult smoking rate) = \_\_\_\_\_ smoking employees (approx.)

Smoking employees \_\_\_\_\_ x \$5,324 = \_\_\_\_\_ the total cost per year to business

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOUR EMPLOYEES?

A pack-a-day smoker spends at least \$5 per day on cigarettes. That adds up to \$150 per month and over \$1,800 per year. For an employee making \$30,000 per year, quitting smoking is like getting a 6% pay increase.

## VERMONT'S SMOKING LAWS

In 2009, Vermont amended its Smoking in the Workplace law to prohibit smoking inside all areas of the workplace. Prior to this amendment the law allowed employees to designate smoking areas if they obeyed certain rules. Now the law requires all indoor areas of workplaces to be 100% smoke-free. In addition, Vermont passed the Clean Indoor Air Act in 1993, which required all enclosed indoor public places to be smoke-free, including restaurants. In 2005, the law was amended to include bars and clubs. (See *Vermont's Smoke-Free Laws* fact sheet for more information.)

## EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT IS CRITICAL...AND EASY

Employers play an important role in the lives of their employees. And while each employer-employee relationship is different, employers have an opportunity to provide information to their employees – information that can benefit both employer and employee.

This package was created to help employers share information about the range of quit smoking services and resources that are available to all Vermonters – all of which are free of charge.

### Vermont's Quit Smoking Services – The Vermont Quit Network

The **Vermont Quit Network** (formerly Quit Line and Ready, Set...STOP) is a gateway to free tools, information and personal coaching to quit tobacco. We understand how hard it is to quit, which is one of the reasons why we remind smokers that Every Try Counts.



The network puts smokers in control with a choice of proven quit smoking strategies that includes in-person and phone coaching, online support from QuitNet, and Your Quit Your Way tools for independent quitters.

To help increase the chances of success, the **Vermont Quit Network** also offers access to free or reduced cost nicotine replacement therapy – patches, gum or lozenges – to smokers using quit coaching (while supplies last). For more information about the network go to [VTQuitNetwork.org](http://VTQuitNetwork.org).

### For More Information

If you would like more information about the Vermont Department of Health's Tobacco Control Program or Vermont's quit smoking services, please contact us at (toll-free) 1-866-331-5622 or e-mail [tobaccovt@vdh.state.vt.us](mailto:tobaccovt@vdh.state.vt.us). And for additional resources and information go to <http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/tobacco>.

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MMWR, 51 (14): 300-303, April 2002. Annual Smoking – Attributable Mortality, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Economic Costs – United States, 1995-1999. Cost reflects 5% adjustment for inflation.

<sup>2</sup> EPIC/MRI Survey. Unpublished Report, April 2000. Smoking Breaks Costly to Business.

<sup>3</sup> Tsai SP, Wendt JK, Cardarelli KM, Fraser AE. OEM, 60: 627-633, 2003. A Mortality and Morbidity Study of Refinery and Petrochemical Employees in Louisiana.



## What Can You Do for Your Employees?

There are several simple and easy steps you can take to help employees who smoke and are ready to quit, or who would like more information. The following is a brief overview of these steps, including tools that are available to your business.

- 1 Workplace Smoking Policy – 100% Smoke-Free**
- 2 Distribute Quit Smoking Information – [Vermont Quit Network](#)**
- 3 Be Ready When Employees Are Ready to Quit**

### **1 Workplace Smoking Policy**

Vermont law requires all indoor areas of buildings that serve as a workplace to be 100% smoke-free. The law does not require that this information be posted, but employers wishing to do so can download (or request) a *100% Smoke-Free* poster by going to [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov) or e-mailing [tobaccovt@vdh.state.vt.us](mailto:tobaccovt@vdh.state.vt.us).

The law does not cover outdoor areas of the workplace (like doorways, near air vents, parking lots, company vehicles, etc.), and employers may choose to designate these areas as smoke-free.

If you would like to update your policy to include outdoor areas, a sample smoking policy has been provided in this package ("Model Smoke-Free Policy"), along with the *Vermont's Smoke-Free Laws* fact sheet and other materials to help guide your development.

### **2 Distribute Quit Smoking Information to Employees**

The Vermont Department of Health provides a range of materials about the services and resources available to help Vermont smokers quit.

#### **PRINTED SAMPLES AND OTHER MATERIALS**

The following samples are included in this kit and are available in digital format from the **QUIT@WORK** section of our website, at <http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/tobacco>.

- *Welcome to the Vermont Quit Network* pamphlet – paycheck stuffer size
- Sample text for company memo, letter, e-mail, newsletter and intranet ("Employee Communications Templates")

## IDEAS FOR DISTRIBUTING INFORMATION

- Post information in cafeterias, break areas, bathrooms, etc.
- Post information and links on company intranet
- Include information in company newsletter
- Distribute a memo or send an e-mail to each employee
- Send a personalized letter to each employee's home
- Include information with paychecks
- Hold a company meeting to share information and discuss issues and ideas, or make it part of an existing meeting
- Contact an in-person **Vermont Quit Network** coaching program (located in each hospital in the state) to present information to managers and/or employees
- Provide quit smoking information and policy to new employees during their orientation

## MORE IDEAS – INCENTIVES AND CONTESTS

In addition to distributing information, some companies offer their employees a little extra motivation and support to quit by using incentives such as the following:

- Hold a quit smoking class at your work site – contact your local **Vermont Quit Network** coaching program to set up the class – a listing of all local programs is available at [www.VTQuitNetwork.org](http://www.VTQuitNetwork.org) in the In-Person section
- Allow employees to attend local classes during their work hours, without losing pay
- Allow smokers to call the **Vermont Quit Network** phone coaching service or use the QuitNet online support during their work hours
- Hold a quit contest with a day or days off for those who quit successfully
- Hold a contest to see who can save the most money by not smoking, with a prize for the winner
- Link a quitting contest with the United Way or other charity, and encourage employees to donate all or some of the money saved by quitting; consider an employee match

## 3 Be Ready When Employees Are Ready to Quit

Once you have provided employees with information about the services available to them to quit smoking, it is important to continue to make that information available. Smokers may not be ready right away, but may decide to quit 2 days from now or 2 months from now.

Vermont's smokers are trying to quit – more than half of them have made at least one serious quit attempt in the last year<sup>1</sup> – but it takes 5 to 7 quit attempts before most smokers quit for good. So having information on-hand and easily available year-round can be the key to trying to quit. And nonsmokers may also have friends and family members who would like information.

The following list includes several simple ideas to keep the message alive:

- Provide quit smoking information (and other health information) during yearly employee reviews
- If employees receive healthcare benefits, provide quit smoking information with insurance premium and benefit updates
- Schedule a regular time to repost information, like every 3 to 6 months
- Make sure all new employees get information about quit smoking services

<sup>1</sup> Vermont 2008 Adult Tobacco Survey



## Employee Communications Templates

This section includes sample text for creating your own company e-mail, memo, letter, intranet page and a newsletter article. A Word version of this text is available from the **QUIT@WORK** section of our website, at <http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/tobacco>.

### E-mail/Memo/Letter

Dear employee,

This short **[e-mail/memo/letter]** is about tobacco use in our state and our company. You may not be a smoker, but you may know someone who is. About 17% of adults in Vermont smoke, which results in the deaths of over 850 Vermonters each year. It may surprise you to learn that more than half the smokers in Vermont tried to quit at least once in the last year. *But like so many other things, quitting takes practice – most smokers find that it takes 5 to 7 tries to quit for good.*

An outline of the free quit smoking services available to Vermonters from the **Vermont Quit Network** is attached, or you can log onto [www.VTQuitNetwork.org](http://www.VTQuitNetwork.org). If you don't smoke, please pass this on to someone who does.

If you have any questions about this **[e-mail/memo/letter]** or the services available to you, please contact me at **[insert contact information]**.

Sincerely,  
**[insert name]**

### Intranet

About 17% of adults in Vermont smoke, which results in the deaths of over 850 Vermonters each year. It may surprise you to learn that more than half the smokers in Vermont tried to quit at least once in the last year. *But like so many other things, quitting takes practice – most smokers find that it takes 5 to 7 tries to quit for good.*

The Vermont Department of Health offers a range of services to help Vermonters double their chances of quitting smoking. If you would like to get ready to quit, find out more about the services or get info for a friend, go to the **Vermont Quit Network** site at [www.VTQuitNetwork.org](http://www.VTQuitNetwork.org).

You can sign up for a call back from a phone coach, find a local in-person coach, get started with online support from QuitNet, and find out more about free or reduced cost nicotine replacement therapy (patches, gum or lozenges) to help double your chances of success (while supplies last).

## Newsletter

### **Vermont Offers a Range of Options for Smokers Who Want to Quit**

Almost 17% of Vermont adults smoke, which means that even if you don't smoke, you probably know someone who does. It may surprise you to learn that more than half of Vermont's smokers have tried to quit at least once over the past year. *But like so many other things, quitting takes practice – most smokers find that it takes 5 to 7 tries to quit for good.*

If you've tried it on your own and want a little help from a coach, would like to get self-help tools or want to log on to an online community of Vermonters like you, check out the following options:

#### **Phone Coaching**

Call toll free 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) for information or to get ready to quit.

#### **In-Person Quit Coaching**

Go to [www.VTQuitNetwork.org](http://www.VTQuitNetwork.org) or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) to find an in-person **Vermont Quit Network** coach.

#### **Online Support**

Sign up for e-mail reminders and tips, and talk to others about their quitting experiences at on QuitNet, go to the Quit Online section at [www.VTQuitNetwork.org](http://www.VTQuitNetwork.org) to get started.

#### **Your Quit. Your Way.**

For a variety of tools and tips to quit on your own, go to the Your Quit Your Way section of [www.VTQuitNetwork.org](http://www.VTQuitNetwork.org).

All Vermonters who use coaching can access free or reduced cost nicotine replacement therapy – patches, gum or lozenges – shipped directly to their homes (while supplies last). Take advantage of these great free services, and remember when it comes to quitting smoking Every Try Counts.



## Setting Your Workplace Smoking Policy

### Ideas for Implementing Policy

- Many businesses find it helpful to involve employees in the process of creating policy, so you may want to ask several employees to create a team to jointly develop and communicate your smoking policy.
- Smokers will be affected the most, so try to get them involved with shaping and communicating the policy. Some businesses have even found “champions” among their smokers.
- Give the process time – employees need time to adjust to change, especially one that may affect their daily routine. You may need 3 to 6 months, or even more, to change your policy.

### Reasons for a 100% Smoke-free Work Site

- All indoor areas of Vermont worksites are 100% smoke-free (see *Vermont's Smoke-Free Laws* fact sheet for more information).
  - This arrangement complies with all laws and ordinances
  - Separate ventilation systems do not fully eliminate secondhand smoke
  - Decreases maintenance costs
  - May reduce the number of cigarettes smoked by employees and encourage them to quit
  - Research shows that creating a tobacco-free workplace is one of the most effective things you can do to help employees stop smoking<sup>1</sup>

### Setting Distance from Work Site Buildings

- Vermont law does not designate that smoking take place at a specific distance from public buildings and work sites, but you may choose to include this in your own smoking policy.
- Many state and private buildings in Vermont require smoking to be up to 50 feet from the building so that smoke does not reenter the building through entrances or ventilation systems, and so it doesn't affect visitors or nonsmoking employees.
- Many Vermont employers have already created smoke-free outdoor policies (distance from building and/or air-intake vents) and policies for company vehicles.

### For More Information

If you would like additional information about smoking policy or to order a printed copy of the *100% Smoke-Free* poster, contact the Vermont Department of Health's Tobacco Control Program at (toll-free) 1-866-331-5622.

<sup>1</sup> National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). HEDIS 2004. Health plan employer data & information set. Vol. 2, Technical specifications. Washington (DC): National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA); 2003. 374p.

# Model Smoke-Free Policy

It is the policy of **[insert company name]** to provide a smoke-free environment for all employees and visitors. This policy covers the smoking of any tobacco product and the use of smokeless or “spit” tobacco, and applies to both employees and non-employee visitors.

## Definition

*Vermont law requires that there will be no smoking of tobacco products within the facilities at any time.*

If smoking occurs outside the building, it must be at least **[insert distance]** feet from the main entrance to ensure that the smoke does not enter the building. All materials used for smoking, including cigarette butts and matches, must be extinguished and disposed of in appropriate containers.

**(For a smoke-free building and grounds)** *There will be no smoking of tobacco products within the facilities or on the grounds at any time.*

*There will be no smoking in any **[insert company name]** vehicles at any time.*

There will also be no tobacco use in personal vehicles when transporting persons on **[insert company name]**-authorized business, or if the vehicle is parked on company premises.

## Procedure

1. Visitors will be informed of this policy through signs, and it will be explained by their host.
2. **[Insert company name]** will help employees who wish to quit smoking by providing information about Vermont’s quit smoking services.
3. Any violations of this policy will be handled through the standard disciplinary procedure.
4. For questions about *Vermont’s Smoking in the Workplace* law, or to file a complaint with the Department of Health, call (toll-free) 1-866-331-5622.